

]

☒ News ☐ Business

Search...
MERCURY (1)

Question mark over internet privacy

By DESIREE SAVAGE

May 5, 2015, 9:03 p.m.

A new report has revealed many of us are confused about internet privacy and hold significant doubts around organisations which handle our personal data.

According to an Intel survey, 50 per cent of people believe healthcare providers are the most trusted with private information, while the least trusted are social media, public Wi-Fi and mobile apps.

Services general manager for Illawarra-based Grand Pacific Health, Diane Knight, said the survey was spot on, as a lot of work had been undertaken to ensure personal information it kept was secure.

"[We] are very clear about what can and cannot be shared, and often people do give consent about what is shared," Ms Knight said.

"We can't put information out to any public domain - nobody would and nobody does - and even in communicating between healthcare professionals, there are very secure platforms to be able to do that."

Web guru and managing director of Wollongong's Internetrix, Daniel Rowan, believes the internet is generally safe.

Common sense should prevail and users should "understand how their device is sending information".

"The risk of misuse is on public Wi-Fi - like at Maccas or in [Crown Street Mall] where sophisticated people can listen in on those connections and get a copy of the data."

Mr Rowan said the availability of the data on your phone or tablet to be seen by others comes down to a website's SSL.

A secure website or app will show a little yellow padlock icon at the top, indicating the data sent to the internet is encrypted, meaning hackers can't simply steal your banking details.

"If it's not a well-known service, or the users aren't careful ... that's when they are at risk."

Like other councils, Kiama recently activated its new National Broadband Network-enabled public Wi-Fi, and while they do take particular data for their records such as sites with highest download usages and what devices are used to connect, they also aim to keep the majority of content private. Kiama Council's general manager Michael Forsyth said the statistics gave the council a good insight into the benefits public Wi-Fi would have for the city's tourism industry, local businesses, tourists and residents.

University of Wollongong technology expert Associate Professor Katina Michael said the onus was on the individual to keep their information safe, however warned it was a constant process, especially with apps.

Overall, the experts agree - if you don't want your information shared, be savvy and understand the privacy policies, and turn off your settings to share information.



